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WRIT 201.01: College Writing II

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WRIT 201: College Writing II, Sec 01

Rhetoric of the Contemporary American Experience: Exploring the Personal, the Public, and the Political

**prerequisite C or better in 101 or direct placement into WRIT 201*

Instructor: Catalina Baker (Cat)

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Classroom: LA 202

Meeting days/time: T/R 9:30–10:50 AM

“**Rhetoric** is the faculty of discovering, in a given instance, the available means of persuasion.”

–Aristotle

“**Rhetoric** is language at play—language plus. It is what persuades and cajoles, inspires and bamboozles, thrills and misdirects. It causes criminals to be convicted, and then frees those criminals on appeal. It causes governments to rise and fall, best men to be ever after shunned by their friends’ brides, and perfectly sensible adults to march with steady purpose toward machine guns...It is made of ringing truths and vital declarations. It is a way in which our shared assumptions and understandings are applied to new situations, and the language of history is channeled, revitalized, and given fresh power in each successive age.”

–Sam Leith

Course Description

These days, the word “rhetoric” sometimes gets a bad rap. For many, it seems to signify empty promises and false advertising. Some believe it’s just a strategic weapon in social or political battles, or that it’s a tool to exclude people from certain discussions. But rhetoric is much older – and more nuanced – than these modern oversimplifications. Rhetoric isn’t a fancy word for meaningless or manipulative language. In fact, it’s the opposite: rhetoric, at its core, is about action, connection, and inspiration. It’s about examining ourselves, empathizing with others, and engaging in a global society as inquisitive and informed citizens.

In this course, we will study, analyze, and use rhetorical devices to interrogate personal, public, and political spaces. This will involve conducting rigorous inquiry and textual examination; seeking to understand others’ perspectives; and practicing the art of advocating, arguing, and persuading. We will look at the building blocks of rhetoric, and we’ll explore how traditional rhetorical structures remain a powerful and prevalent force in contemporary American culture.

You will also have the unique opportunity to study argumentative techniques as a reader and practice those techniques as a writer. Throughout the semester, we will ask these questions as we read, write, and analyze:

- 1) *How do authors use rhetoric to position themselves within a larger cultural conversation?*
- 2) *How do we identify and understand our own biases? How can we resist our biases and assumptions in order to make room for a more nuanced and complex understanding of a person, topic, situation, or text?*
- 3) *And how can we use rhetoric in our own writing to demonstrate humility and introspection, to cultivate sincere curiosity about and interest in others’ experiences, and to contribute meaningfully to sociopolitical discourse?*

Our work in this class will be discussion-driven and collaborative; you’ll work in small groups, write often, and share your discoveries. We’ll also research, analyze, and incorporate mediums in new, and perhaps unfamiliar, ways. We will look at written texts – primarily longform journalism, think pieces, and expository/persuasive articles – as well as speeches, visual art, videos, advertisements, music, and graphics,

paying acute attention to what messages are communicated and how they're communicated. Because writing development is an iterative process that takes place over time and across different contexts, **all WRIT 201 classes use portfolio evaluation as a primary means of evaluation.** By the end of the semester, you should be able to identify examples of rhetorical muscle; accurately and creatively assess rhetorical situations; and make effective rhetorical choices in your own writing to compose incisive, graceful, and convincing arguments.

Learning Outcomes

WRIT 201 is an intermediate writing course. The university learning outcomes include the following:

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

Our Classroom Community

In this course, we'll likely encounter big, seemingly hot-button issues. This is okay! It's actually an important part of rhetorical study to parse out our intellectual differences with other people – to practice discussing and disagreeing in honest, sensitive, and respectful ways. But to do this effectively, you must be prepared to withhold your preconceived notions and be an active listener, consider the larger cultural contexts at play, and value experiences and opinions that may differ from your own. Ultimately, I expect this classroom to be a supportive and inclusive environment, one where curiosity, exploration, and diverse knowledge are celebrated. It should be a safe place to flesh out and develop your ideas without fear of being put down or embarrassed.

We will work together as a community to create an environment of reciprocity and respect in this classroom, one that allows each member to share their ideas freely. Commentary, in writing or in person, that disparages, marginalizes, or insults an individual or a group will not be tolerated, and I will take administrative action if the need arises. **Just remember and adhere to the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you wish to be treated.**

General Course Requirements

Required Course Texts

- *College Writing II: Rhetoric and American Cultures* (available at the UM bookstore only) – abbreviation in homework schedule is “CWII”
- Outside readings accessible through Moodle – abbreviation in homework schedule is “M”

Other Course Materials

- Notebook for in-class writing
- A folder for miscellaneous class materials/handouts
- A folder or binder for your final portfolio

Class Expectations

- All major assignments will be typed. Please use 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced lines, and 1-inch margins on all sides.
- All reading assignments will be completed by the assigned date.
- All writing assignments will be turned in on time.
- All homework will be typed.
- You're all adults, and you've chosen to be here. I expect that you will read.

- You will print and annotate the readings from Moodle. If you do not print your readings, you must take thorough notes. **I will occasionally check that you've printed/annotated/taken notes.**
- You will bring your books and printed readings to class.
- You will attend class, and you'll arrive prepared and on time.
- You will actively, vocally, and appropriately participate in class discussions.

Related Tips to Help You Succeed!

1. Bring your book and readings to every class. Not doing this will affect your participation grade.
2. Check your email regularly.
3. Check Moodle regularly.

Weekly Work and Major Assignments

Homework

You will have readings due almost every class. Over the semester, you will also have to write Moodle posts on at least five occasions. These posts will be in response to the readings for that day or week; please read the weekly schedule and the instructions on Moodle carefully to note what's due and when. Whenever you have Moodle posts due, you must do both of the following: 1) compose a post that illuminates new connections, shares insights and thoughtful observations, and/or asks substantive questions about the readings at hand and the rhetorical techniques used/discussed, and 2) compose a different post that responds to a post from your peer that appropriately builds on what they have said. Each post must be at least 150 words long.

Discussion Leaders

One time in the semester, you and couple of your peers will co-lead a class discussion about the readings for a day you have chosen. You will sign up for this at the beginning of the semester, and I will provide more guidance as we approach student-led discussion days.

Major Assignments

These are the four major assignments of the course:

Assignment 1: Curating a Public Persona: The Celebrity Profile (polished draft due 2/5)

Assignment 2: Dissecting a Problem: An Analysis of a Written Argument (polished draft due 3/5)

Assignment 3: Effecting Social Change: The Persuasive Researched Essay (polished draft due 4/4)

Assignment 4: Expressing the Self: The Cover Letter (or Personal Statement) (polished draft due in Final Portfolio)

Expect to write four essays and make major revisions to three of them over the course of the semester, in addition to other short writing assignments in and out of class. Major revisions take many forms, but generally they will be big, substantive changes that demonstrate meaningful engagement with the feedback you've received; a willingness to take rhetorical risks while practicing the techniques we've learned over the semester; and your sincere commitment to growing as a rhetorician, reader, and writer.

I will give you a detailed assignment sheet as we begin each of these major assignments. Your first draft will be workshopped by your peers, and your polished draft will incorporate your peers' feedback and reflect the changes you make through your own editing and review. You will get robust feedback from me on the polished drafts, and you will then revise again for your final portfolio.

You will have the chance to develop all of your major projects through a process of inquiry, research, and drafting. You'll compose papers in and out of class, alone and with small groups. All major assignments must be completed for you to pass the course. I will respond to these projects with written comments focused on suggestions for revision, but I will also mark them using a check system to help you know where you stand on a specific project. Don't just expect to pass in a final portfolio without any drafts; your work on these assignments throughout the semester affects your grade.

Grading Breakdown and Policy

Participation – 35%

Attendance, being on time, being prepared for class, vocal participation, contributions to peer workshops and small group work, effort spent on class activities, timely completion of all major assignment components and drafts, timely completion of small assignments and homework, engagement in Moodle discussions, co-leading class discussion one day in the semester, reading quizzes (maybe, if we need them!)

Final portfolio – 65%

Revised Versions of Major Assignments 1, 2, and 3 (I will be looking for signs of revision, so this will comprise most of your portfolio grade!); Original Major Assignments 1-4; Part 1 of Major Assignment 2; Part 1 of Major Assignment 2

****You must earn a C- or better, as well as turn in your portfolio and complete all major essays by their deadlines, in order to receive credit for this course.****

Students enrolled in WRIT 201 are graded by the traditional letter grades – A, B, C, D, F. I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class.

Evaluation of Assignments

Basic Guidelines

Unless I specify otherwise, please follow these guidelines. And please speak with me if you have questions or feel you have extenuating circumstances.

- Your work must be typed, printed, and in class with you to be considered “on time.”
- Late, handwritten, or emailed work does not receive credit.
- Late major assignments receive no revision comments.
- If you have an excused absence, the homework is due the next class period and will not be considered late.
- **You are always welcome to complete assignments early if you will be missing class.**

Homework and Small Assignments

For most short assignments, Moodle posts, and homework activities, I will be looking to make sure you’ve met the requirements for that assignment and evaluating it on a 0 to 5 scale, with 0 signifying a missing assignment and 5 signifying full credit. Unless I specify otherwise, I will be looking that you’ve done the following:

- 1) Met the minimum page or word count
- 2) Demonstrated a close and critical reading of the relevant texts
- 3) Engaged meaningfully, thoughtfully, and appropriately with the prompt, question, or assignment

If you do these things, you will get a 5; if you do not do these things, you’ll get a 4, 3, 2, or 1 (or 0, if you didn’t do it) that correlates with the effort you put into the assignment. I can tell when you’re not invested, you haven’t read, or you didn’t put in sufficient time. And it’s not fun for either of us.

Major Assignments

All major assignment drafts will receive feedback for revision and an evaluation based this system:

OT (On track): A project with an “OT” generally meets its rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for extensive revision; however, there will likely be many small revisions to make. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for focused revision.

M (Major changes required): A project with an “M” meets the basic requirements but needs **significant** revision and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for revision.

U (Unsatisfactory): A project with a U does not meet basic standards, and requires extensive development and attention. An unsatisfactory submission may be incomplete or inappropriate to the assignment. Such a submission may receive a request to rewrite within a week in order to receive teacher comments.

****If an assignment is shorter than the page requirement or missing the required number of sources, it will not receive teacher comments. As a reminder, 2.5 pages IS NOT 3 pages, 238 words IS NOT 250 words, etc.****

Related Tips to Help You Succeed!

1. Do not lose your old drafts or any of the components of the Major Assignments. You need these for your final portfolio.
2. Do not save over your drafts. Create new files.
3. Do not lose my feedback.

Attendance

If you miss the first two classes, you will need to drop the course on Cyberbear and enroll in another semester. This is university policy and the reasoning behind it is that important groundwork for the semester is put in place in the first few class meetings. Students without that foundational framework are better served by taking the course when they can give it the attention it deserves.

More than two absences from a TR class will compromise your grade. Five or more absences from a TR class will result in a failing grade. Here’s the breakdown:

- 3rd absence: final grade drops one letter grade (for example, A drops to B)
- 4th absence: final grade drops two letter grades (for example, A drops to C)
- 5th absence: final grade is an F

Here’s the reasoning behind the attendance policy. Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting; discussing reading and writing; learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts; or collaborating with your instructor and classmates. Required University events will be excused if you provide appropriate documentation. Personal situations inevitably arise that make it impossible for you to make it to class. Remember, however, that’s why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

If you must miss class, *you are responsible* for obtaining any handouts or assignments for the class. Make sure you talk with me in *advance* if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class.

Cell Phones and Laptops

Cell phones should be silenced and put away except in cases of documented necessity, emergency, or specific in-class work. If you have an emergency, please leave the room to use your phone, EVEN if you’re only texting. Laptops are permissible; however, their use should help the learning process, not hamper it. I reserve the right to ask you to put away your laptop if I feel it is a distraction to you or others; however, if you require a laptop in class, I will ask you to stay on task if you are using your laptop for things other than class work.

Participation

Speaking and listening are important steps in translating ideas from your mind to the page. Therefore, vocal participation in class – in both large and small group discussions – make up a significant portion of your

grade. You **must** get comfortable being an active participant in class. It's critical that you 1) engage with your peers, 2) listen attentively, and 3) actively contribute. Speaking up in class can be frightening, but this is a supportive community! Your contribution will encourage others to join the conversation. If you don't have a fully formed thought in mind, that's fine – go ahead and pose a question to the group or offer a half-formed insight you'd like others to respond to. Be present, take risks, and engage fully in this course. **Just being here will not suffice.**

Participation also includes coming to class prepared and on time. It includes doing the required reading and writing for each class. Note: Please don't be late. Lateness will hurt your grade because it is an unnecessary interruption and because latecomers are likely to miss valuable information. Please see *Participation Grade Descriptors* for more information.

Students with Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

Academic Conduct and Plagiarism Policy

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. According to the University of Montana Student Conduct Code, plagiarism is “representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own. Consequences include failing an assignment, failing a course, or even expulsion.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University of Montana community, and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students should review the Conduct Code so that they understand their rights in academic disciplinary situations. The Conduct Code can be found at http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and speak with me.

If I suspect that something a student has written has been plagiarized, in full or in part, intentionally or unintentionally, I take the following actions:

- I alert the student of areas of the text that are suspicious
- The student receives no credit on the paper, pending failure, and it is up to them to prove that they turned in original work
- Each student is asked to provide me with hard copies of the research they used in writing the paper
- If the student cannot provide documentation of their research, the student will fail the paper

*These measures are also put into action when a paper is poorly cited. When a student brings their research to me, I use the time to talk with them about citations and make sure that they understand how and when to cite in the future.

In the case that the student is unable to provide evidence of their original work, or in the case that I have evidence that the student has intentionally plagiarized their work, the following occurs:

- The student will automatically fail the given assignment
- The student may fail the course unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- I may pursue a plagiarism citation unless, at my discretion, I offer alternative assignments and/or conditions
- The student may receive alternate assignments, etc. to avoid failure (in this instance, all conditions must be met; I need to see evidence of excellent work and effort, and work must be completed on time)
- All other previously established conditions in the class (i.e., attendance, participation, homework grades, etc.) still stand and can still cause a student to fail the course
- In the case of blatant or egregious offenses, I will not negotiate against course failure and will pursue

University Assessment

This course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university's writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following Writing Learning Outcomes:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. I would be happy to show you the rubric that will be used for this assessment; please let me know if you're interested in seeing this.

Portfolio Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A

Superior portfolios will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that go beyond the requirements. A portfolio at this level is composed of well-edited texts representing different writing situations and genres that consistently show a clear, connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The portfolio takes risks that work.

B

Strong portfolios meet their rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/ mechanics. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make some choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

C

Consistent portfolios meet the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination) and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in different writing situations and genres. The writer composes across tasks at varying levels of success with some superficial revision. The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

D

Weak portfolios do not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Most texts are brief and underdeveloped. These texts show a composing process that is not yet elaborated or reflective of rhetorical understanding related to composing in different genres and for a range of writing situations. Texts generally require extensive revisions to purpose, development, audience, and/ or style and mechanics.

F

Unacceptable portfolios exhibit pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, or style/ mechanics that interfere with meaning and readers' understanding. Unacceptable portfolios are often incomplete. A portfolio will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.

Participation Grade Descriptors for WRIT 201

A

Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his/her verbal, electronic, and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B

Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C

Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D

Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F

Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.